

COMMISSIONER TODD STAPLES

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Contacts: [Bryan Black](#) and [Lindsey Pope](#) | (512) 463-7664 | 1-800-TELL-TDA

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COMMISSIONER STAPLES AWARDS FIRST-TIME FEDERAL DISASTER RELIEF GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES SUFFERING EFFECTS OF SEVERE DROUGHT

AUSTIN – To support Texas cities and counties still suffering from last year’s historic drought, Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples announced \$2.1 million in federal disaster relief grants has been awarded to Concho County, Falls City, Lawn, Leakey, Real County and Sabine County. All funds are made available from a new initiative that directs funds toward drought needs from the Texas Department of Agriculture’s (TDA) Texas Community Development Block Grant Program.

“Last year’s historical drought ravaged our state and dramatically depleted the water supply to many of our rural communities,” Commissioner Staples said. “These grant awards are an example of how we can solve Texas challenges when we channel our state’s limited resources to the highest priority need in a way that is coordinated and accountable. Communities receiving these funds will now be able to develop new strategies to locate and utilize alternative sources of water. Water is a vital, precious resource that no community can do without.”

TDA awarded the grants from its Disaster Relief Fund, which provides grant assistance to eligible communities to help alleviate the effects of a natural disaster. With the transfer of these disaster relief programs in 2011 to TDA, Commissioner Staples recognized the underutilization of certain disaster-designated funds and immediately implemented changes to ensure these funds would be more readily available to communities impacted by the drought.

“The funds we were able to obtain through this grant could not have come at a better time,” said Falls City Mayor Brent Houdmann. “As a result of the 2011 drought and other factors in our area, our Artesian Wells stopped flowing. Our greatest resource was in jeopardy. By obtaining this grant, our city is investing in pumps for harvesting water in our wells and we will also upgrade the city’s water facilities to secure clean drinking water for the citizens of Falls City for generations to come.”

Concho County, in conjunction with Millersview-Doole Water Supply Corporation will use the \$350,000 grant to extend the raw water intake system in the Lake Ivie Reservoir.

Falls City will use its \$350,000 grant to install a new water pump that will reach 1,000 feet into an existing water well that cannot currently reach the receding water table. Falls City also plans to install two water cooling towers.

In Lawn, low lake levels will soon prohibit the city's water intake station from pumping water. Lawn's \$350,000 grant will fund a new water intake station that will be able to reach deeper portions of Lake Coleman.

In Leakey, the city's numerous wells are no longer capable of providing the amount of water needed for its citizens. Leakey will use its \$350,000 grant to enhance its water supply system by installing a new water line and water filtration system needed to improve water quality standards.

Real County plans to use its \$350,000 to develop a new water source for residents of Oakmont Village Saddle Mountain Water Supply Corporation. The grant will help the water corporation acquire a new well site, drill a new well and install a transmission line.

Sabine County plans to use its \$350,000 grant to allow the Pendleton Harbor Water Supply Company to purchase water from a neighboring water system by extending existing water lines.

Grants from the Drought Relief Fund come from the Texas Community Development Block Grant Program. Counties and cities eligible for funds must be named in a state or presidential disaster declaration. Counties must have populations of fewer than 200,000 residents, and cities must have populations under 50,000. This program serves approximately 1,017 eligible rural communities, 245 eligible rural counties and provides services to more than 375,000 low- to moderate-income beneficiaries each year.

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